



Gardenline

Winter 2002-03

Green Spring Receives Accreditation

In August of this year, Green Spring received notification from the American Association of Museums that the AAM Accreditation Commission had voted to grant accreditation to Green Spring Gardens. The decision completes five years of hard work to achieve this goal. During the first two years of the process (1998-99), Green Spring staff worked to establish the professional practices required to qualify as an accredited organization. In August of 1999, a committee consisting of Chris Strand (director), Sherrie Chapman (assistant director), Georgianna Blouin (coordinator, Manor House), Becky Super (coordinator, visitor services), Cindy Brown (horticulturist and coordinator, adult programs) and Harry Allen (vice-president, FROGS) began the lengthy process of writing a 60 page self-study of Green Spring. Included in the self-study was an analysis of the site's administrative, horticultural, programmatic, and financial practices. In addition, over 30 photographs and dozens of program flyers and other printed materials related to site operations were included in the cardboard box-sized application that was sent to AAM in February of 2000. And then we waited...and continued to improve the professional quality of our activities.



Finally in March 2002, an AAM visiting committee consisting of three skilled professionals from other AAM accredited sites came to Fairfax County to investigate the validity of our application. After a flurry of preparation and a busy three day visit from the committee...again, we waited. Finally, in August, we received our answer.

So why was it worth all this work (and waiting)? Accreditation is a recognition of our commitment to excellence and high professional standards. Only a handful of public gardens in the United States have achieved this goal. It will give Green Spring public recognition, stature in the professional community, and an edge when applying for grants.

The report of the visiting committee provides Green Spring with a number of insights about our operations. It commends us for our clear understanding of our mission, our well-qualified staff, and the high level of motivation and dedication of our

staff and volunteers. It also recognizes the strength of the Friends of Green Spring as an organization and notes that its by-laws and procedures "abide by professional museum standards" and "have been highly effective."

The accreditation report provides direction for future projects. It notes that while we provide diverse educational and cultural programming, we have reached capacity for the size of our staff and our present facility. The report commends our gardens and plant records but cites a need for a plant record procedures manual. It also suggests that while Green Spring has "not experienced significant loss or vandalism, it seems vulnerable due to its porous borders, easy accessibility,...and lack of security staff." These are issues Green Spring will have to address when it applies for reaccreditation in 2012.

Every person in the Green Spring community

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Frog Sounds

One has to be an unmitigated optimist to say the weather this summer was great for gardeners. It was the third hottest summer on record. The temperature rose to 90 degrees Fahrenheit on 54 days. From August 10, 2001 through August 9, 2002 precipitation was 18 inches below the normal for the period. Water shortages occurred in many communities and water bills were large for those who insisted on keeping everything green and growing. If heat was not enough to keep us indoors, the threat of mosquito-borne West Nile virus sufficed.

I spent many early morning walkabouts studying the effects of heat and drought on the garden. I lost two shrubs, both over 35 years old and in very dry locations. A number of plants flowered but didn't set seeds, yet some of my southwestern drought tolerant plants bloomed very well and set seed better than in our normal years. It was more like home for them. Leaf fall from the tulip trees in late August was amazing, but stopped after the heavy rains in the last week of the month. I switched to watering exclusively with the watering wand by mid-June. About every five days I made the rounds watering those plants that were blooming or that had yet to bloom, or those that were showing stress. Many perennials just "packed it in" for the year after they bloomed, shedding leaves and dying back to the roots. Plants with high water requirements obviously did not do well.

I saw no overwhelmingly adverse effects on our garden wildlife, although robins disappeared from our lawns in August and our family of crows may have succumbed to West Nile virus. Hummingbirds thrived. We had at least four for part of the summer and they stayed longer this year. Butterfly numbers seemed normal though monarchs were scarce until migrants arrived. Now in late September and early October, we've seen large flocks of grackles several times, particularly in our neighbor's red oak tree sharing the wealth of acorns with the blue jays and woodpeckers. Even the chipmunks are climbing high into the tree to join in the harvest.

I thought the heat and drought would adversely affect attendance at Green Spring's fall garden day. I was wrong. The crowds were large and enthusiastic and the vendors reported brisk sales. I realized again, if I needed to be reminded, that gardeners are future oriented and are always planning ahead for the gardens to come. I'm already looking ahead to Green Spring's winter lecture series and new ideas to put into practice in my garden.

*By Don Humphrey, President
FROGS*

Green Spring Wish List

You may not have the time to volunteer or be independently wealthy, but you may still be able to help Green Spring Gardens in its mission to educate and inspire the public. Green Spring is looking for donations of the following items:

- Aerator for the pond
- Motorola Talk About Radios
- Pentium III or IV Computers
- Used gardening books
- Brick Repointing for the Manor House
- Clay and or ceramic pots
- Color Copier
- Website Help
- Cushmans/ Gators
- Wooden Crates
- Backhoe
- Exhibit Boards
- T-Square for drawing
- Tabletop Dictionary Stands
- Ground-penetrating radar on the grounds of the Manor House
- Water Wands
- Acetylene Torch Kit
- Old Towels
- Little Red Wagons
- Book: American Horticulture Society A - Z
- Digital Camera (3-4 megapixels)

Art in the Garden

Surely you've seen the truck tires, folksy whirligigs, plastic deer or pink flamingos adorning the front yards of suburbia or have driven by roadside collections of dancing gnomes, chainsaw art or plaster animals. Perhaps you have your own collection! Maybe you've made a folk art birdhouse or mosaic tile stepping stone – garden ornaments large or small can add interest with color, humor and inventiveness.

On my summer travels I visited two botanic gardens and was inspired by artistic touches at each. Along winding paths at the Chicago Botanic Garden I encountered a giant 7-foot ladybug, a 10-foot damselfly and a huge spider suspended on a lifelike web! Imagine a parade of enormous ants marching across an open field – all these fantastic sculptures were made by artist David Rogers from natural materials such as willow, cedar and teak for the Big Bugs exhibit. You may have seen this installation at the U.S. National Arboretum here in Washington, D.C. last year. At the Cleveland Botanic Garden I toured the Hershey Children's Garden and was charmed by smaller-scale details – a shoe garden, a junk rainbow made with plywood and discarded toys, scarecrows and more. My favorite moment was watching a 4 year-old girl carefully fill up a watering can from a handpump and take it over to a brightly planted bicycle basket - the old bicycle was an oversize planter!

You don't have to travel far to discover garden art - come to Green Spring - each of our horticulturalists has added artistic elements to their gardens to accentuate foliage or flowers, highlight a theme or just to entertain. Have you visited the Children's Garden lately? Come see the china flowers blooming in the berry patch. These "flowers" are made with recycled plates, cups and saucers and steel rebar "stems." They're created by volunteer extraordinaire Peggy Morrison. Another talented volunteer, Erwin Straubinger, crafted the monarch butterfly mailbox at the entrance to the Backyard Habitat Garden. Two patterned "wings" cut from sheet steel sway gracefully above the black "body" mailbox – this Monarch won't fly away as it's mounted on a rustic cedar branch! Interpretive flyers are tucked inside two other beautifully painted mailboxes made by artist and Green Spring volunteer Ruth Gurinsky - in the Children's Garden and Virginia Native Plant Trail.

Do you like bugs? Look for the original mailbox at the Spring House. The newest of our garden areas, these demonstration beds were designed and installed by the Master Gardener volunteers from the class of 2002. The mailbox draws your eye instantly with its bright colors, bugs and oversized praying mantis mounted on top! Thanks to artist Ian Waugh.

During the summer months, hidden among lush garden foliage in the Townhouse Garden, bright fish swam close to oversize "bubbles" made from bowling balls, glass marbles and glue. Nancy Olney and her volunteers also added a suncatcher made from cut glass and beads. Farther afield in the Shrub Border sits a cedar tuteur Nancy made for climbing sweet potato vines (*Ipomea batatas*). Stroll through the Rose Garden and you'll find a surprise among the delicate blades of switchgrass (*Panicum virgatum* 'Heavy Metal') – a bright blue pot. This simple object catches your eye and brings the total garden composition into focus. Back at the Horticulture Center entrance a simple bamboo fountain splashes water into a small pond filled with aquatic plants.

While you won't find giant ants, gnomes or pink flamingos here you'll find plenty of other examples of garden art, many of which can be made inexpensively. If you need some color or whimsy in your garden, consider a hands-on workshop – they're fun – we provide all the materials, you make a mess and we clean it up!

*By Charlotte Albers, Children's
Program Coordinator, GSGP*



Garden Ornament Workshops

Personalize your garden with one-of-a-kind ornaments you create. The instructors will demonstrate how to create the projects at the specified time, but students will have additional time to work on their individual creations. All supplies provided. Choose one or choose all three.

Mosaic Stepping-Stones

Use chipped china, sea treasures, mosaic tile and broken knickknacks to make a stepping-stone. Take your unique masterpiece home, place it in your garden and tiptoe through the tulips.

Sat., Feb 15, 9-10:30 am. Fee: \$35

China Blooms

Create a true 'perennial.' Combine colorful plates, cups, saucers and bowls to make whimsical, ever-blooming flowers. They may not attract butterflies, but they will make you smile.

Sat., Feb 15, 10:30-11:30 am. Fee: \$35

Pot Tuteur

Teach your vines to climb. Make a vertical accent for your container to control rambling plants. Call it an obelisk, tower, or tuteur; your mandevilla will cling in style.

Sat., Feb 15, 11:30am-1pm. Fee: \$35

Gaze About Green Spring

What have you learned this year? We all wish for perfect gardening conditions: loamy, well-drained soil, low humidity, an inch of rain a week, temperatures in the high 70's, and the ideal combination of sun and shade. If we had those peerless conditions, we couldn't complain. But how would we grow as gardeners and develop our signature styles? Creative solutions to difficult situations make imaginative, unique gardens. We need challenges to grow and mature. After the challenges faced this year our gardening skills should be close to perfection!

What did we learn at Green Spring this year? I questioned our gardeners; it was a bountiful year for object lessons, especially about the drought. Joan put it very simply, "Hoses are heavy, a good sprinkler is hard to find, and quick connects are essential." Becky unfortunately discovered that plants, which usually thrive in shady conditions, were turned into "crispy-critters" this year. Sandy noticed that the combination of the heat and drought was lethal to rhododendrons, mountain laurel and daphnes. Donna observed a reduction in the usually wide variety of weeds, but the ones that thrived were very drought tolerant. This year purslane and oxalis ruled. Purslane is a tasty, succulent green you can add to your salads, but oxalis is just annoying. Nancy stopped listening to the weatherman; she is convinced that rain only falls outside the Beltway.

We were constantly watering the gardens, but it was like putting a Band-Aid on a gaping wound. Some plants thrived, but only those growing in the plant's preferred position (sun/shade, moist/well-drained, etc.). It was hard to keep water guzzlers or misplaced plants alive. The most drought tolerant plant was tall fescue grass. We all swore the lawn was completely dead. What a surprise to see it turn green after one of the infrequent late summer rains.

I was shocked by the number of people who were unaware we were in a drought – talk about being out of touch with the environment. I accepted the browning plants in natural areas, but the dead and dying plants in homeowners' front yards appalled me. Even more amazing were the frantic calls we received. When an evergreen turns solid brown, is it dead? Would it help to begin watering them? FYI: they're dead!

Most gardeners aren't entomologists, but we do notice the insects in our gardens. I have never observed mealy bugs in the garden before; this year they popped up everywhere. Evidently they thrive in dry conditions because they aren't as susceptible to fungal and bacterial attacks. Our tasty gardeners noticed an increase in

the mosquito population; Nancy said applications of DEET didn't even protect her. All different types of beetles, including asparagus beetles (a first for Green Spring) attacked the vegetable garden. A search on Google found a website that recommended interplanting asparagus with calendula to help deter beetles. It worked!

Not all our lessons stemmed from the drought. Spending years in the garden has taught Mary the art of patience. Learning plants' characteristics helps her avoid frustration, especially when waiting for anticipated growth spurts. Impatience causes people to overplant or plant things too large for the site. But if that happens, Brenda advises to practice the art of self-editing. If the plant outgrows its position or looks bad – toss it out! Don't become sentimental and let a plant spoil the flavor of a garden. Part of the joy in gardening is having a hole to fill with a new plant or just enjoying the empty space.

Marian's advice is scholarly. If you are a beginner or even an experienced gardener, and you question your abilities – check with the experts. She improved her pruning skills by researching and then practicing what she read.

Using annuals as a temporary solution is a great idea. Sandy filled a spot with *Plectranthus forsteri* 'Athen's Gem', which was earmarked for the future addition of a permanent shrub. She bought herself time to make a good decision and she was repaid with a beautiful garden. Annuals can also be used to fill in the holes while you are waiting for shrubs and perennials to fill in. Don't overplant – use temporary stage markers.

Chris learned a lesson in humility. As the director of a public garden people are always asking him for gardening advice. (I am sure all gardeners have been put in that position once or twice.) Even though Chris offers his best solutions, he's learned not to get offended when his suggestions aren't taken.

Don't forget the lessons you've learned this year. We should keep journals to record the valuable, hard-earned information. After all, we should make new mistakes every year, not repeat the old ones. Sherrie's lesson learned echoes that sentiment. As you and your garden mature, remember to take pictures recording the evolution. One day, when you are famous, a landscape historian may want to research your garden and use it as a classic example of a well-designed 21st century garden. Wouldn't it be terrible not to have anything to share?

*By Cindy Brown, Interpretive Horticulturist
and Adult Programs Coordinator, GSGP*

FOUR NEW CHIRPING FROGS

Besides being capable of growing gorgeous plants, Green Spring now has another accomplishment to add to its list – we successfully attracted Purple Martins this summer.

If you visit the Park regularly, you probably noticed the Purple Martin house sitting high on the pole near the kitchen garden. We put it up in mid-April when the first of the Purple Martins started arriving in our area from South America. Early arrivals are usually on their way to previous nesting sights. A second wave of birds arrived later, looking for new nesting sights. These birds are the subadults that were hatched in this area last year. In mid-May Purple Martins started checking out our house.

Once we saw the Martins checking out our house, close observance and weekly nest checks soon revealed a typical Martin nest being constructed. In one of the compartments we saw neat, closely packed twigs, straw, and mud, which was ultimately topped by a final layer of fresh green leaves.

By June 20th, five pure white Purple Martin eggs were in the nest. Both parents were busy period flying in and out of the compartment; but sitting on the eggs was done by the female. After an incubation period of approximately 17 days, the eggs hatched on July 9th. One of the nestlings died shortly afterward. It was segregated from the rest of the nest, leaving four hairless, blind nestlings, the faces of which only a mother could love.

Weekly nest checks and careful record-keeping continued. We monitored the growth of the babies and ensured no predators or parasites were invading the nest. Both parents made frequent, brief trips to the nest, sometimes with food visible in their beaks. One of their favorites is dragonflies.

By the end of July, little bird faces poked out of the nest opening. It was quite a spectacle to watch their first tentative flights. Very noisy parents coached the timid young birds and soon they became capable fliers.

The family hung around the house for another two weeks, roosting in it at night. On August 6th, they abandoned the house, probably to join a larger flock and get ready for their fall migration.

If you didn't see the Purple Martin activity this year, check back next spring. We hope additional families will join the one we had this year. When the word gets around of Green Spring's hospitality, we're sure there will be a waiting list to rent one of our condos.

Donna Stecker, Gardener GSGP

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should be proud of having participated in the achievement of accreditation. While a small committee compiled the application for accreditation, every member of the Green Spring staff and the Friends of Green Spring, every volunteer, every person who attends a Green Spring program, and every visitor are participants in our success. Our thanks to all of you for making Green Spring the successful professional organization that it is.

Green Spring would also like to congratulate the Colvin Run Mill and Sully Historic Sites of the Resource Management Division who were reaccredited at this time and would like to thank the staff of the Resource Management Division and the Fairfax County Park Authority who support our operations and assisted with the lengthy accreditation process.

By Sherrie Chapman, Assistant Director, GSGP

NEW POT DONATION GUIDELINES

We are hard at work reconfiguring the FROGS plant sale area, and no longer have space to store the large number of plastic pots and trays we've accumulated. The wide array of incompatible pot sizes and shapes currently on the market has become unmanageable for our limited staff. While we still appreciate your donations, please presort your pots and bring us only those outlined below. Thanks in advance for your cooperation.

YES, we still need:

- Terracotta and ceramic pots for greenhouse use
- Quart and larger-sized nursery pots for propagation

NO, please do not bring:

- Cellpacks
- Trays/flats
- Small nursery pots (4" or less in diameter)
- Decorative plastic pots



The Winter Garden in a Container

☾ The beauty of the winter garden, clear and spare—is quite different from the freshness of spring blossom, the lushness of summer flowers or the richness of autumn leaves.” It is “...subtle tones, somber contrasts, and striking highlights.” (Rosemary Verey, *The Garden In Winter*)

The winter garden does have its own unique qualities. Stripped of bright colorful annuals and swaths of blooming perennials, we become keenly aware of the garden’s overall structure: of its bare bones. It is about space, shapes, outlines and silhouettes, patterns and textures. Colors are subdued and bark, twigs and berries come to the forefront. For those of us who love to create gardens in containers, this is the season where we simplify and get back to basics.

The winter garden is dominated by muted greens and browns. These are backed by grays and whites, black and purples, and highlighted with splashes of red and yellow. You can easily transplant these colors to a container. Use conifers and broadleaf evergreens to set off the light browns of grasses, seed heads, and dried pods or to act as a foil for the whites and grays of willows and variegated ivies. Use berries, colored twigs and even painted forms for a splash of yellow, red, or black. Red and black are vital and dramatic so use them sparingly as accents or elements of surprise.

I like to create simple winter containers that focus on textures and outlines. The formula is easy. Conifers, broad-leaved evergreens or grasses become the focal points. Underplant these with an evergreen of contrasting texture, and tie them together with the open contours of a deciduous shrub. The possibilities are limitless. For example, I like to contrast the small leaves of boxwood with the large, glossy leaves of bergenia or rohdea. I might even add the fine needles of a conifer to the mix. The contrast in form and texture of a small, wispy *Chamaecyparis obtuse* ‘Crippsii’, backed by the spikes of *Yucca* ‘Color Guard’ and bare arching stems of a *Kerria japonica* ‘Kin Kan’ is simple but effective. Add to this the subtle gradations in the tones of yellow foliage and branches and this combination becomes stunning.

Architectural details, such as trellises and fences, become more dominant in the winter garden. Garden art becomes more visible. I like to add these

forms to my winter containers more than my summer plantings where they may get lost. They add structure and impact or even whimsy. Add painted bamboo poles for vertical impact, a willow lattice painted red for a touch of excitement, or a glass gazing ball to catch the light.

We tend to think of winter as not container gardening friendly because of cold and freezing temperatures, which can be a problem for both the plants and the containers. These are not insurmountable problems. Simply remember a plant that is hardy in the ground in your garden may not be root hardy in a container. The soil in a container freezes and thaws more easily than that in the garden. Compensate by picking plants that are hardy one to two zones colder than where you are gardening. Also the more soil in a container the better its insulating properties. Ideally, plant in containers that are at least 18” deep and 22” in diameter. Place your containers close to the house for protection (that’s where we want them anyway so we can admire them from our favorite window) and if you’re still worried, you can double pot, putting one pot in another about 6” larger and insulating between the pots with leaves, straw or coarsely shredded bark.

Good choices for outdoor containers for winter are still the old standbys made from cement, wooden containers made of durable hardwoods and stone, but these are heavy and difficult to handle. Hypertufa may start to crack after a few winters and recycled plastic does not insulate well and may also crack with extensive freezing and thawing. One of the best choices is fiberglass, which is lightweight, expands and contracts without cracking and also insulates. Some fiberglass containers are even metal infused and develop a nice patina with age.

Root hardy plants for winter containers might include:

Chamaecyparis obtusa ‘Split Rock’, ‘Nana Gracilis’
Chamaecyparis pisifera ‘Golden Mop’ or ‘Golden Pincushion’
Juniperus horizontalis cvs.
Juniperus virginiana ‘Grey Owl’
Pinus mugo, ‘Mops’, ‘Compacta’, ‘Gnom’, var. ‘Pumilio’, or ‘Sherwood Compact’
Buxus microphylla var *koreana* x *Buxus sempervirens* ‘Green Gem’, ‘Green Ice’, and ‘Green Mound’
Euonymus fortunei ‘Moonshadow’
Cornus sericea ‘Silver and Gold’
Cornus alba ‘Argenteomarginata’
Ilex verticillata ‘Red Sprite’

This list of suggestions is just the tip of the iceberg. Let your imagination take you the rest of the way and enjoy a season of container gardening that should not be overlooked.

By Mary Frogale, Horticulturist,
GSGP

Manor House Volunteers are Invaluable

It has only been a few months since I came on board as the Assistant Manor House Coordinator, and I have already learned just how invaluable the volunteers are to the programs here at Green Spring's Manor House. The c.1760 house offers a variety of programs to the public and relies on its volunteers to make them a success.

Volunteers at the Manor House take part in several aspects of the programs. For our tea programs, volunteers help arrange tiered trays with tasty finger sandwiches, delectable desserts, and fresh edible flowers and herbs. Once the guests have arrived, volunteers pour tea and offer their knowledge on both the historic house and its surrounding gardens. When guests depart, our trusty volunteers begin the chore of clearing plates, loading the dishwasher, hand-washing our beautiful donated tea cups, and wiping down the tables... all of this on a Sunday afternoon when they could be leisurely reading the newspaper. It is this type of dedication that makes the Manor House's volunteers so extraordinary. Both Fairfax County and Green Spring Gardens are indebted for the time that volunteers give to the programs offered.

Although it may seem as if Green Spring and its staff reap all the benefits from the volunteers, this is certainly not the case. Volunteers gain a great deal as well. Many take advantage of the resources available at Green Spring to learn about horticulture and the history of the land. They also have the opportunity to build lasting friendships with one another. The camaraderie that exists between our volunteers is wonderful to see. They do not see it as a "volunteer job" so to speak, but rather a chance to talk with others who have similar interests and who love Green Spring as much as they do. Not only do the volunteers get to build friendships with one another, but with the staff as well. In the short time that I have been here, I have developed a strong respect and admiration for the volunteers of the Manor House. I look forward to their arrival and the chats that we have while they are here. Often they share stories of past teas and the way things were done "in the old days." Many of the Manor House volunteers have been with the program since its inception. Once again the dedication and loyalty that exists with our Manor House volunteers is incredible. Green Spring and in particular, Georgianna and I, are grateful for all that they do, and we look forward to gaining new volunteers as the programs here at the Manor House continue to grow.

*By Kara Ryan, Assistant
Manor House Coordinator*



Turn a Leaf

A new book in the Green Spring library combines two of life's pleasures, botany and travel. Written by the famous neurologist and author Oliver Sacks, *Oaxaca Journal* melds the cultural and botanical beauties of Mexico. Seeking out rare plants has driven botanical travelers for centuries and added many new plants to ornamental gardens. Journals of expeditions have also been a part of this culture, from the far-flung excursions of Darwin to the countryside rambles of Rev. Gilbert White. In this tradition, Dr. Sacks chronicles a trip with members of the American Fern Society to Oaxaca, a state in southern Mexico.

With 690 species of ferns ranging from an inch or two tall to 15 feet high, Oaxaca has the richest fern population in Mexico. Its cultural history is equally interesting with Dr. Sacks detailing trips to pre-Columbian ruins, 16th century churches and colorful local markets. Interspersed with anecdotes on subjects as diverse as chocolate, hallucinogenic plants, Mexican history and poisonous ferns, *Oaxaca Journal* is a fascinating window into the botanical wonders and culture of Mexico. It's also a look at the interesting people Sacks meets on his travels and their passion for ferns. An adventure awaits you on the shelves of the li-

*By Marianne Mooney, President
Potowmack Chapter, VNPS*

Happy Anniver-
sary
FROGS!

Thank you
For 10 Years of



A Gardeners' Holiday Open House



*Saturday, December 7th
9 am - 4:30 pm*

*Enjoy, decorations made by local garden clubs, an art exhibition by
the students at Columbia Elementary, live music, decoration
demonstrations at the Manor House, shopping and refreshments.*

Fun for the whole family!

Free